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MSNBC EXPLORERS BAG FIRST FOOTAGE OF SOURCE OF MISSOURI RIVER

A team of four adventurers looking for the absolute source of the Missouri River shot video of a gurgling spring in Montana's Centennial Mountains Monday and claim it to be the first footage of the historic headwaters.

The four men hiked to a remote spot up the drainage of Hell Roaring Creek, in far southwest Montana, where the Continental Divide runs east and west along the Montana-Idaho border. The team was led by Pasquale Scaturro and Richard Bangs, executive producers of an MSNBC web site program, "Great Escapes."

The journey is part of the multimedia program that will document the trip. The first reports from the explorers will go online Monday (Sept. 13) at www.greatescapes.msnbc.com.

Scaturro just returned from a journey down the Nile River, filmed for an IMAX movie. Bangs is a noted explorer and author. Other members of the team are Didrik Johnck, a Portland-based photographer; and Andrew Locke, video and audio producer from Seattle. The team sought the source of the river as the starting point of a journey that will span the entire length of the river, from the gurgling spring to the mouth of the Missouri at St. Louis.

The team is using various modes of transportation in its journey, covering most of it in a Ford Escape, a hybrid sport utility vehicle that draws power from gasoline and an electric battery. They'll also trace parts of the journey in canoe and plane. They flew over Missouri Headwaters State Park in Three Forks Wednesday for a view of the confluence of the Gallatin, Jefferson and Madison rivers.

The team subscribes to the theory that the true headwaters of a river are at a point that is farthest in distance from its mouth. Under that definition, Bangs said, the head of the Missouri is found at the font of Hell Roaring Creek at the head of the drainage formed by Red Rock, Beaverhead and Jefferson rivers.

The spring is located on the flanks of Sawtell Peak, a mountain in the Centennial Range on the Idaho side of the Continental Divide.

Other Montana stops on the journey include Fort Benton, Malta, and Bainville.

The team will spend two weeks between the headwaters and the mouth of the Missouri, 2,315 miles. Each night of the trip, Bangs writes a travel story. That and the team's photos, video and audio recordings are transmitted to MSNBC headquarters in Redmond, Wash., for posting to the web site. The team's footage of the source of the Missouri River will be posted to the site by Monday. (Sept. 13)

■ END –

PLEASE NOTE: Footage of the spring is available to the news media. Contact Richard Bangs at (206) 605-8116 or Pasquale Scaturro at (303) 898-2598. These are the numbers for cell phones that the travelers are carrying with them.